

Chapter Three

IS THE SEXUAL IMPULSE DUE TO NATURAL INSTINCT OR TO FOOD STIMULATION?

In the light of the above considerations concerning the influence of food on sexual desire and behavior, the question arises whether all sex desire is the result of chemical stimulation rather than being due to natural instinct or the hypothetical "libido" of the Freudians. The mechanistic theory of the origin of sexual impulses, as against the theory of their instinctive origin, was upheld by the great American biologist, Professor Jacques Loeb, whose theory of tropisms closely resembles the theory of conditioned reflexes of Prof. Pavloff. According to this conception, all sexual phenomena, both psychical and physical, is a product of physico-chemical stimulation and not due to instinct at all. In fact no such thing as "sexual instinct" exists. According to Prof. Loeb, the sexual impulse, in all its manifestations, is a product of chemical and physical stimulation from the environment; constituting a tropistic reaction to physicochemical stimuli and is therefore subject to physicochemical control.

This new conception of sexual phenomena having a physical and chemical origin opens up the possibility of a new method of sexual therapy and psychiatry in place of the older method of psychotherapy based on the psychoanalytical approach. For if, according to Loeb's conception neuroses and psychoses have a biochemical and endocrinological origin, rather than a psychic one, then the cure of nervous and mental diseases must consist in a normalizing of the blood chemistry and the functioning of the endocrine glands, and not by the methods employed by the psychoanalysts or by psychiatrists in the past.

Loeb's theory of tropisms is part of his general mechanistic theory of vital phenomena, which is now accepted as the foundation of modern biology and physiology. It is the purpose of this chapter to show that this concept offers a satisfactory explanation of sexual phenomena, which can be accounted for on a purely physico-chemical basis, without resorting to the dualistic conceptions of the psychoanalysts and psychologists of the past who considered body and mind as two separate and interacting entities. Loeb bases his conception of sex on a monistic, materialistic conception and considers sexual acts as tropistic responses or conditioned reflexes in reaction to stimuli from the environment, by control of which it is possible to control the reactions they elicit.

According to Loeb's theory of tropisms, sexual behavior of organisms, like all other forms of behavior, obeys the general biological laws that govern tropistic responses to stimuli or conditioned reflexes of the Pavlov school of reflexologists. This mechanistic conception does away with the hypothetical "sexual instinct" of the older psychologists or the "libido" of the psychoanalysts. According to this new and more scientific conception, sexual behavior, both psychic and physical, is due to physicochemical stimuli which come from the environment and constitute an automatic tropistic reaction. This opens the way to achieving sexual control by control over the stimuli which evoke sexual responses and for the establishment of a new scientific sex morality on a biochemical, mechanistic basis.

In his theory of tropisms, which created a revolution in biological thought, Prof. Loeb provided the basis for a mechanistic theory of sexual behavior in terms of forced tropistic reactions to physical and chemical stimuli. The